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HOW WEST AFRICAN MILITARY FORCES CAN CONTRIBUTE  
TO THE SUCCESSFUL EVOLUTION OF DEMOCRACY  
IN THEIR COUNTRIES

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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Ghana Armed Forces Staff College Diploma

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

1996

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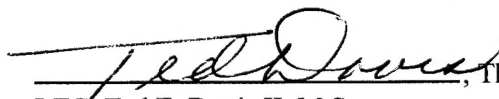
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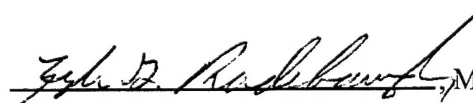
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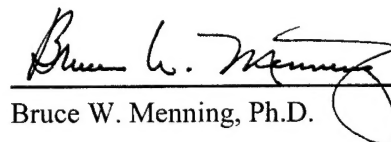
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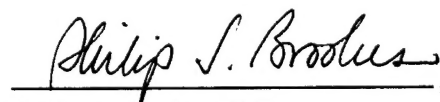
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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (Reference to this study should include the foregoing statement.)



## ABSTRACT

HOW WEST AFRICAN MILITARY FORCES CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESSFUL  
EVOLUTION OF DEMOCRACY IN THEIR COUNTRIES by Major Samuel Yanyi-  
Akofur, Ghana, 74 pages.

West Africa is ripe for democratic development, but chronic instability impedes progress. This thesis describes the causes and extent of instability and concludes that the military is a major contributor. The question is how to prevent the military from intervening in domestic politics while channeling its energies in constructive directions. This thesis proposes that political leaders in West Africa develop measures to ensure that military forces refrain from internal political interference. Inspiration and insight for such measures derive from case studies of Brazil, Venezuela, and Spain, in which the military has remained outside domestic politics after varying periods of intervention. The object is to prescribe interactions, policies, incentives, and standards of conduct which discourage military forces from internal intervention while encouraging them to promote stability and democracy.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have to thank my God Almighty not only for the wonderful opportunity granted me to work and earn this master's degree but also for making it possible for me to meet Lieutenant Colonel Ted Davis, who handpicked my committee members and therefore made my initial takeoff a very smooth one.

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Combining this Master of Military Arts Science project with the Command and General Staff College coursework has not been easy. I am, therefore, very appreciative of words of encouragement from my Academic Councilor and Evaluator Lieutenant Colonel Hugh Graham, who often checked on my progress and urged me on. His interest in seeing my project come to a successful end made it impossible for me to consider quitting.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

This thesis analyzes how the military in West Africa can contribute to the successful evolution of democracy in the nations within the region. Since West African countries gained independence about 40 years ago, they have been enveloped in seemingly insurmountable crises; these include continued economic stagnation, indebtedness, famine, widespread corruption at all levels, political instability, solution-defying conflicts, and a sense of hopelessness among the general populace. Conflicts keep recurring in most parts of the region. Dictators rule in Togo, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and, quite recently, Niger.

There is simply no peace in any of the countries within the region. In contrast, one finds economic growth, prosperity, and technological advancement in those countries or regions where a peaceful security environment exists. It appears that developed countries continue to prosper partly because of the enabling, peaceful climate afforded by the prevailing democratic processes. The USA, for instance, has not experienced an African style of political upheaval in its 200-year history, and, since World War II, other major nations in Europe and Asia have not experienced internal threats to their stability. In fact, there is rather increasingly a worldwide move towards adopting democracy, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. One prominent commentator even believes that the world is in a midst of the "third wave" of democratic expansion.<sup>1</sup>

There is, quite naturally, a desire in West African countries to adopt similar democratic systems of government. The desire is aptly shown in the excellent articulation and mobilization of opposition by intellectuals, traditional chiefs, professionals, trade unions, and religious groups, a phenomenon that brought down Nkrumah of Ghana and General Buhari of Nigeria. In addition, there has been the birth of a more autonomous class associated with the informal sector of the economy. This development has significant implications for democracy. Politically, "the growth of the non-formal modes of economic exchange and production joins with growth of voluntary associations to provide alternate loci of power, authority, and legitimacy."<sup>2</sup> This quickens the evolution away from authoritarianism and centralism towards a more liberal democracy.

There are clear manifestations of the desire to try democracy. According to the Economist, Africans have at last lost patience with their rulers. They are particularly angry about declining living standards, but also about arbitrary and bad government, corruption, and a breakdown of law and order. They have decided that "multipartyism and free enterprise policies are their most likely salvation."<sup>3</sup> Yet, there should not be another rush to import the Western system of democracy without making essential adaptations to ensure that the system fits West African countries' traditions, culture, political problems, and social forces.

In spite of this strong desire for democracy most West African nations find themselves in a constant state of instability. The causes of the present state of instability in West Africa are not difficult to find. Prominent among them are conflicts caused by ethnic tensions, religious conflicts, poor political leadership, military interventions, and economic stagnation.

Ethnic tensions have resulted in conflicts in Nigeria (Biafra civil war in 1967-70), Mauritania (light skinned members of the Moorish community clashing with fellow, but Black Mauritians in the second half of the 1980s), Mali (Tuaregs fighting for greater autonomy in the country and the nation's war with Burkina Faso in 1985 over the Agacher Strip), Liberia (Khrans fighting Gios and Madingos in the ongoing civil war), Ghana (on a smaller scale, Komkombas

fighting against other ethnic groups like the Dagombas and Nanumbas in the North), and in Senegal (where there is conflict in the Casamance region, besides the border war with Mauritania in 1989-90). Most of these conflicts originate from the colonial period, when the political boundaries of current African nations were drawn with little regard to ethnicity. Consequently, while some large ethnic groups were split between colonial states, other groups with little in common were brought together within new state boundaries.

Besides ethnic tensions, religious differences have resulted in conflicts like the religious riots that occurred in Northern Nigeria during the current decade. These riots often involve the enterprising Christian Ibos from the East (but now settled in the North) and the Moslem Fulani / Hausa in the Sokoto and Kano areas of Northern Nigeria. Some of these riots have led to widespread destruction of private property, mass movements of the victimized Christian Ibos, and fear of similar incidents in other parts of the country.

In addition to these chronic problems, it is evident that democracy also suffered from the failure of most nationalist leaders to cultivate and nurture the democratic process. A leading African historian has argued that most of these leaders accepted democratic elections as a means to an end, and as a vehicle or condition for independence. "It is clear that for all but a few leaders . . . commitment to liberal democracy was a transitory one."<sup>4</sup> Typical examples are Ghana during Dr. Nkrumah's regime, Guinea under Sekou Toure, Houphouet- Boigny of Ivory Coast, and Olympio of Togo, all of which eventually adopted the dictatorial single party system of government. The individual citizens in turn do not have that vital sense of national responsibility to contribute to the development of their countries. It is not surprising therefore, that individuals in successive regimes tend to concern themselves with acquiring personal wealth rather than striving to uplift the national political and economic well being.

The resultant combination of economic stagnation, political violence and intolerance, instability, and ethnic polarization typically paves the way for military overthrow of democratically elected regimes. The recurrence of military coups has therefore become a major

cause of instability in West African nations. The table below, compiled from The Europa, South of The Sahara, shows the current number of coups in the region.<sup>5</sup> Recurring military interventions have severely impacted the global perception of West African stability and have exacerbated existing economic conditions. Above all, coups have further retarded democratic reforms and have contributed to internal and external pessimism for change in the region.

Current number of coups in West African nations

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF COUPS
Benin	6
Burkina Faso	5
Cape Verde	-
Gambia	1
Ghana	5
Guinea	1
Guinea Bissau	1
Ivory Coast	3 failed attempts
Liberia	1
Mali	2
Mauritania	3
Niger	2
Nigeria	6
Senegal	-
Sierra Leone	4
Togo	2



Because of these conflicts and coups, attempts in West African countries to evolve an acceptable democratic system have not been very successful. The unstable environment has further restricted the steady growth of the economies within the nations in the region. Foreign investments, for example, have been low because of the absence of the requisite security conditions needed to encourage investment. The 1995 Strategic Assessment for the US on Africa by the Institute of National Strategic Studies reflects this, noting that "the evidence suggests that the private sector's interest in Africa is also wavering" and that "the climate for investment will become increasingly risky."<sup>6</sup> This slide toward economic collapse is worsened by West Africa's rapidly increasing population (the highest growth rate in the world at an average of about 3 percent per annum)<sup>7</sup> which is also causing severe environmental degradation, unemployment, and placing extreme pressure on land and water resources.<sup>8</sup>

With the reversals to the recent experiments in Nigeria (when the military annulled elections in 1993) and in Niger (the January 1996 military coup), one wonders whether the military forces in West African countries can play a positive role in promoting democracy in their nations. It is easy to conclude that the best contribution that military forces in West Africa can offer to democratic growth is to not overthrow duly elected governments. Such a position is reflected in the viewpoint of Constantine P. Danopoulos<sup>9</sup> who states in his book that "by far the greatest threat against democratization, . . . comes from the Armed Forces which in spite of failures and less than enviable records as political governors, command the means and organizational structure to supplant the new regimes and stop democratization in its tracks."

It is important to add that in addition to not overthrowing elected governments, militaries in West African nations have the capacity to provide an enabling environment for the growth of democracy in their nations. As stated earlier, the success of democratic practice in West Africa depends on a host of political, economic, and social factors and forces. Even if these forces are working well, a coup can easily derail the democracy process. The theme of this paper, therefore, is to assess the role of military forces in promoting democracy in West African

countries. The research will also determine how the nations in West African countries can ensure their militaries refrain from intervention into domestic politics.

### Importance

With the present trend of global democratization, most West Africans are interested in democracy succeeding in their countries and in the region as a whole. The absence or failure of democracy in the region has been a source of instability and misery for the inhabitants. The situation is becoming so serious, that if nothing is done soon, nations in West Africa may be overtaken by "anarchy," as described by Robert Kaplan in his Atlantic Monthly article.<sup>10</sup> There is little doubt that democracy, on its own, cannot resolve all problems in a country. But, it appears that democracy is at least a tried, tested, and proven system which offers alternative solutions. There is also enormous pressure by Western governments on most African and Third World governments to adopt some form of democracy. The former British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd confirmed this when he remarked that:

Countries which tend toward pluralism . . . market principles should be encouraged. Governments which persist with repressive policies, corrupt management and wasteful discredited economic systems should not expect us to support their folly.<sup>11</sup>

It is also becoming apparent that democracy has some positive effect on the economy. Terry Lynn Karl reflects that view when she says that:

Patterns of greater economic growth and more equitable income distribution, higher levels of literacy and education and increases in social communication and media exposure may be better treated as products of stable democratic processes rather than the prerequisites of its existence.<sup>12</sup>

The continued absence of democratic reform, therefore, may result in greater misery for West African nations due to the withholding of foreign capital and investments necessary for any economic development. Every effort should therefore be made to ensure that the democratic experiment succeeds.

This study looks at one major cause of the first failure of democracy in West African countries. As an instrument of national power, the military should play a more positive role, instead of wrecking havoc on the democratic process. Specifically, military forces should and can provide a secure environment in which democratic reforms and economic activities proceed smoothly. This research highlights the important role military forces can play in democratic societies and, consequently, emphasizes the need for the political leadership of West African nations to work to ensure the realization of democracy. Few nations can aspire to democracy if the military does not afford an enabling security environment.

#### Assumptions

To focus this research, some assumptions must be made. First, it is assumed that the genuine desire for political democracy and economic growth will continue to be the goal of emerging political leaders as well as the people of West African countries. As stated earlier, there presently exists what has been described as a global democratization process, with the greatest changes taking place in Africa and Eastern Europe. This trend must emphasise the role of the military as an enabling force. While the military on its own cannot create a democratic system, the military's non intervention in domestic politics can provide a significant impulse for democratic development.

The second assumption accepts the veracity of Larry Diamond's theory that a casual relationship exists between democracy and a free market system. In an article on "The Globalization of Democracy," Diamond asserts that "three decades of quantitative research and historical change give strong support to the thesis of a positive casual relationship between economic development and democracy."<sup>13</sup> It can therefore be reasonably expected that the successful adoption of democracy in West African countries will result in economic developments, which, in turn will foster stability and greater prosperity.

The final assumption is that international financial institutions and donor nations will continue to provide capital and foreign aid to countries that move along the road to democracy. It is an important observation that as both African and East European countries adopt democratic systems and liberal economies, competition for international finance will be keener. In light of this, it is only those countries that persevere and eventually succeed in adopting democracy which will gain the most. The internal role each national institution will play to ensure the success of the experiment is therefore very important.

### Definitions

Critical to this research is the definition of democracy. Even with the demise of communism, this term remains very vague, and some countries insist on their own definitions. This tends to distort the spirit of the word and clouds issues. For this research, Larry Diamond's definition of democracy is used. In his "Globalization of Democracy" he defined democracy as:

a system of government that meets three essential conditions: meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and groups (especially political parties) for all effective positions of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies such that no major (adult) social group is excluded; and a level of civil and political liberties - freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations - sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation.<sup>14</sup>

Obviously, countries satisfy this definition and its conditions in varying degrees. The purpose is to provide criteria, not to insist that all nations meet all the conditions immediately to qualify for description as democratic.

The term armed forces describes organized groups that are involved in the managed application of violence. Often, the term is loosely used to refer to regular and irregular military organizations, as well as standing and voluntary or auxiliary formations. For this research, the term refers specifically and exclusively to those military institutions and organizations which are part of the state.<sup>15</sup> The armed forces of West African nations are normally made up of the army (ground forces), navy, (sea borne forces), and air force (forces that control air and space). The

terms armed forces, military, and military forces may be used interchangeably and normally convey the same meaning. Police forces and the gendarmerie are not included in the definition.

A coup d'etat is a sudden decisive exercise of force in politics, especially the violent overthrow or alteration of an existing government by a small group. To shield themselves from questions of legality and gain some form of legitimacy, the perpetrators of coups usually set aside the constitution and rule by decree. Members of the armed forces decide who will hold leadership positions, what policies will be followed, and how government resources will be divided among contending social and interest groups.

West Africa refers to that part of Africa bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the west and south, by the Sahara Desert to the north, and to the east by a line corresponding to the eastern boundary of Nigeria.<sup>16</sup> It is not easy to define West Africa in geographical terms, but the sixteen countries which currently make up the region are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.<sup>17</sup>

#### Delimitations

Since most West African countries gained independence from the European powers only forty years ago, this research is restricted to the period 1956-1996. Other examples from other parts of the world will be used for comparison and illustration. It is not the intention of this research to discuss specific reasons for the failure of democracy in any individual West African country. The scope does not extend to West African countries which have not experienced coups because their experiences do not provide lessons of utility to the other nearby countries.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Research Design

This is an analytical work which uses available primary and secondary materials to examine the role the military has played and could play in West African countries. The research is designed to establish the prevailing state of instability in West African nations and to examine how the military has greatly contributed and continues to contribute to the problem. An attempt is made at not only investigating the reasons for this trend, but also researching how other countries which faced similar problems with the military in the past managed to overcome it. An analysis of the measures adopted by these countries then provided possible solutions that West African countries could implement to solve the problem of military interventions. This analysis relies on concept, description, assessment, and comparison. There is a requirement to describe, first, the setting, then to determine what role the military has played in that setting. Next, there is the requirement to determine what role the military might play. Finally, there is the requirement, based on research, assessment, and analysis, to suggest possible solutions to the problem.

The research first describes the prevailing unstable political environment that exists in West African countries today. Although most nations in the region became independent approximately forty years ago, they have yet to evolve stable governing systems. Attempts at adopting democratic systems of government have failed in most of the countries because prevailing instability has resulted in civil wars, economic degradation, poverty, and anarchy. The problem becomes more acute when one compares the development of countries in other parts of the world like Malaysia and Singapore, which have witnessed dramatic growth since they became independent around the same time. It is self-evident that the presence of a stable security environment can partly explain the relatively impressive growth of these other countries.

The research, then, investigates how this stable environment may provide insight into the West African situation. Essentially, the research explores the question whether or not the presence of a democratic government is essential for stability and economic growth.

It is important to establish whether or not West African political leaders are now aware of this fact and whether or not there is any genuine desire to adopt democratic systems of government in West Africa. This is important because the military role can only become relevant if there is some sentiment favoring democratic evolution. In addition, the research briefly looks into the concept of democracy to establish a definition that reflects practical and workable characteristics. The research examines whether there were any other benefits from adopting democracy, as well as what the current trend of governance looks like in the world generally, and specifically, in West African countries. This approach is important because it explains why similar developments are essential for West African countries in quest of democratic systems of government. The research then briefly examines the extent of the failure of democratic practice in the West African region, attempting to determine whether or not West African countries could successfully practice democracy in the first place.

Once the desire to adopt democracy is established, the research turns to reasons why past attempts have failed. It is anticipated that the results will provide insights into what causes are similar in the affected countries and how the problem might be addressed. Chief causes appear to be ethnicity, religious conflicts, poor political leadership, military interventions, and economic disparity, and each will be examined briefly. Ethnic tensions are seen to bear a very large part of the blame for instability in West African countries. Because of the multi ethnic character of West African societies, ethnic tensions are reflected in almost every facet of life in the region from political parties right down to the military. The research examines the extent of ethnic tensions in the military forces of the various countries in the region and attempts to demonstrate that ethnicity becomes an issue primarily once conflict breaks out. This assertion does not, however, discount the fact that there have been occasions when ethnic problems led to the

creation of tensions within the military. Further investigations into the reasons for the ethnic problem in West African countries reveal additional factors, such as colonialism, the reluctance of some ethnic groups to accommodate each other, and a tendency for individuals to exploit the ethnic issue for personal gain whenever possible. The focus, however, is on ethnicity only as it pertains to frequent military interventions in West African nations.

Because research indicates that the military is a major cause of instability in the West African countries, emphasis falls on the political role the military has played in West Africa. Using examples from the region, the research identifies the nature of this political role, concludes that they were mostly military interventions, and reviews the reasons for their frequency. The thesis then attempts to establish if there is any devastating sociopolitical effect for such a trend. Armies throughout the world have been analyzed in terms of their social and ethnic composition, training, and sometimes their ideology. Intense debate has focused on the overt and covert reasons for military intervention in the political arena. To specifically analyze the problem of coups in West African nations, the research attempts to discuss whether there are other factors that might shift attention from the often cited weaknesses of African states and certain organizational features of African armies to the internal dynamics of African military hierarchies, their officer cliques, and corporate and individual ambitions. Such analysis affords insight into how future interventions might be avoided, thereby helping to ensure the durability of elected regimes.

After establishing that there are identical factors that result in military interventions in most West African countries, the study then proceeds to investigate if there are historical examples of other countries overcoming similar problems. This research departure is motivated by the understanding that the mere identification of the factors for military interventions has, in the past, failed to resolve the problem.

The research therefore reviews how selected countries which have experienced similar military-induced political upheavals have managed to overcome the problem and examines the



new roles their armed forces are playing to encourage democracy in their countries. Some military forces in Latin America fit into this category. The similarity of politically instable conditions between Latin American countries of Brazil and Venezuela and present West African nations makes Latin American case studies vital and relevant. There is also a case study of Spain, where a democratic government has followed a long period of rule under Franco, a military dictator. Although the cultures of Latin America and Spain are fundamentally different from those of West African nations, the research attempts to demonstrate commonality of circumstances and the implication. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the measures employed to overcome military interventions in other countries might prove instructive to West African nations. These case studies provide a good blend of measures that West African countries might employ to excise the canker of military intervention. The study of successful measures employed by other countries reveals a similarity and suggests a pattern of solutions.

Another important facet about the case studies involves a determination of whether or not the military has a specific role to play in a democratic government. Case studies support the contention that military forces are essential for democracy in an unstable security environment, including that which exists in West African countries. It is acknowledged that neither the Latin American examples nor Spain are yet durable democracies, but their achievements are nonetheless notable and pertinent to the purpose of this thesis.

At the same time, the writer does not blindly recommend the adoption of measures from the case study countries. Instead, the research analyzes all the measures, selects the relevant ones, and suggests ways in which these measures could be adapted to suit the West African situation and environment. The analysis provides a feasible answer to the research problem which is, What role military forces in West Africa can play to promote democracy in their countries?

## CHAPTER THREE

### Literature Review

The literature review draws from books, articles, newspapers, periodicals, and documents which covered the subject matter. Material pertained to critical areas of the research, namely democratic theory, the third world, the West African political situation, civil-military relations, and relevant case studies.

Democracy is the subject of many books. It was evident during the review that there are widely divergent views on the definition of democracy. However, in order to concentrate on the type of democracy practiced mainly in the western world, Larry Diamond's definition of the term has been used, not only because it has a distinct western bias, but also because it provides essential pillars which most other writers agree are necessary, with relevant changes, to make democracy work in any environment.

Prominent among these was Ross Harrison, who, in his book Democracy, assesses the merits of democracy and asserts that democracy has been accepted as good value, not only in the modern world but even during the time of the ancient Greeks. He explains that this widespread acceptance of democracy occurs not only because it guarantees the enjoyment of collective and individual rights by the citizens, but because of its benefits and the stability that characterizes western governments that have embraced it.<sup>18</sup>

It was gratifying to read another writer, Donald Harowitz, who, in his book Ethnic Groups in Conflict, notes that democracy is workable in ethnically divided societies like West Africa. This assertion contradicts John Stuart Mill, who states that democracy is "next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities."<sup>19</sup> Although Harowitz agrees that

there are problems with democracy in ethnically divided countries, he stresses that the politicians are forced to solve this problem by entering coalitions with other parties in order to claim a majority of seats. Such a process helps to overcome the danger of a single ethnic based political party dominating the political scene.

Larry Diamond also writes extensively on democracy with particular reference to developments in Africa. In his book Democracy in Developing Countries, he points out the current trend towards the globalization of democracy and vividly describes signs that there is a similar trend going on in some African countries. He also attempts to establish whether there is any relationship between democracy and economic prosperity, which is interesting because it appears that economic development is one of the major problems confronting most West African nations today.

There is a considerable body of writings on the state of political instability in the West African region. Harowitz looked at the problem from the multi-ethnic aspect of the countries, while Samuel Decalo, Claude Welch, Arthur Smith, Agyemang Duah, and Bayo Adekanye examine the causes for military interventions. Constantine Danopoulos also assesses the difficulties of civilian rule in the developing world in light of the frequency of military interventions. Since the research was aimed at investigating the military role in politics, the other causes of instability in West African countries were not pursued in depth.

The problem of coups is seen by some observers as endemic to the culture of the area, while others believe that coups are caused by weaknesses in the states and by the organizational nature of African armies. Writing on military interventions in general, two professors of the State University of New York (Claude E. Welch and Arthur K. Smith) contend that "no nation's armed forces remain apart from politics" because as they put it, politics concern the distribution of values and power within a society and, consequently, the "military can hardly be prevented from participating in that process."<sup>20</sup> Such a view is very true, but there are prescribed methods

for all individuals to participate in the political process, and none of them comes from the barrel of a gun.

A number of studies has been done to determine reasons for military coups in general and for those that have occurred in Africa. There is general agreement on these causes with the exception that in recent times emphasis is shifting from the often quoted organizational reasons to personal ones, including the individual ambitions of military leaders. This is the view of several contributors to Samuel Decalo's book Coups and Army Rule in Africa.<sup>21</sup> Decalo is also of the opinion that the reasons for coups in Anglophone West Africa countries are different from those that lead to coups in the Francophone nations. His reasons for the differences are difficult to accept, as they boil down, essentially, to personal issues. His book is very current because it traces the history of recent coups in specific countries like Togo, Benin, Congo, Uganda, and Niger. He is, however, not limited to only these countries, but gives many good examples from occurrences in Ghana, Nigeria, Chad and other West African countries. His book serves as an excellent source of information on coups in Africa and even more importantly of the modalities of military regimes.

C. E. Welch, and Arthur Smith, both lecturers at the State University of New York, have written about the causes of military coups generally in their book The Military Role and Rule. Written in 1974, some of their work appears dated, but they do provide relevant facts and analysis for the role of the military in the politics of developing nations.

In the Political Dilemmas of Military Regimes, Christopher Clapman and George Philip<sup>22</sup> edit contributions by individual political scientists, including J. Bayo Adekanye, who looks at reasons for the reoccurrence of military coups d'etat in Africa. The reasons that Adekanye cites are pertinent to this thesis and provide a valuable West African insight into how to overcome the problem of coups in the countries in the region.

Constantine Danopoulos, teaching political science in San Jose State University, in contrast, writes about the success of civilian rule in selected Third World countries, including some in Africa. His book analyzes the societal, internal, and international factors that have kept armed forces in the barracks and then projects future political developments. One of the contributors in his book analyzes the reasons behind the successful civilian control of the military in Zambia.

Danopoulos edits another book in which individual contributors use case studies to analyze how militaries around the world have successfully transitioned from military rule to civilian rule. One such case study is by Rita Giacalone and Rexene de Hanes, who assess the role of the Venezuelan armed forces in the democratic growth of that country. Another writer Fernando Rodrigo, in the same book, analyzes the democratic strategy used with the military in post-Franco Spain. Both case studies point out that the institution of certain measures can aid in keeping the military in their barracks and refraining from intervention in local politics.

The all important issue of civil-military relations is discussed by Andrew Goodpaster and Samuel Huntington. While Goodpaster writes about the educational aspects of civil-military relations, Huntington writes about the problem of the soldier and the state and describes the relationship that exists between military and civilian society based on the level of interaction. He rightly believes that a high level of interaction enhances professionalism and identification with the state. Goodpaster asserts that the basic role of the military is to serve the parent civil society and goes on to include preservation of a country's territory and commerce from attack.<sup>23</sup> He, however, stresses the need for civilian control of the military. He explains the various measures that nations can employ to attain this, to include the use of law, regulations, policies, and the placing of sizable civilian contingents within the military structure. Additionally, he emphasizes the need for a deep, well informed understanding of the civil-military relationship between the military leadership and their staff.<sup>24</sup>

Paul Zagorski, a political science professor of Pittsburgh State University, extensively discusses the roles military forces of Latin American countries are playing in their ongoing struggle for democracy. In particular, Zagorski details the role of the Brazilian and Venezuelan armed forces in the evolution of democracy in their nation.

In the aggregate, these sources have provided rich material to inform the approach and content of this thesis. The outlined problem, afforded context, and suggested possible solutions to the research question. Other materials from periodicals have provided additional primary and secondary sources of information. Together, the mixture of materials form the foundation on which the thesis is based.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Military Participation in Domestic Politics

Military intervention in domestic politics is not an unusual phenomenon in West Africa or in other parts of the Third World. As noted by Gaetano Mosca, a nineteenth-century Italian political scientist, "the class that bears the lance or holds the musket regularly forces its rule upon the class that handles the spade or pushes the shuttle."<sup>25</sup> In West Africa, the coup d'etat, the most dramatic form of military intervention, generally follows a single pattern: there is increased popular discontent evidenced by rioting, strikes, and other forms of civil disobedience, followed by political leaders ordering the armed forces to restore law and order by force. But, instead of restoring law and order, the military dismisses (overthrows) the current regime and installs a new government consisting of military personnel (officers and enlisted soldiers) and civilian supporters of the takeover.

The political involvement of West African military is not restricted, however, to violent upheavals. The military has also played an active positive role (directly and indirectly) in the political transformation of nations in the region. Most political observers and the societies at large often overlook or easily forget the positive contributions due to the frequency of coups d'etat. Indeed, it will be shown in this chapter that some coups have taken place because of bitter wrangling among politicians in certain West African countries. Military coups have nonetheless played a very disruptive role in West Africa since 13 January 1963, when the first intervention took place in Dahomey (now called Benin). It is frightening that this trend proliferated to the degree that only a decade later coups became the single most prevalent political phenomenon in the region, if not the whole continent. In fact, apart from Mauritius in 1982, no election

successfully ousted a ruling party from office in the first two decades of Africa's independence.<sup>26</sup> Between 1956 and 1985, the majority of all coups as well as one third of all attempted coups and one third of all reported plots in Africa were recorded in West Africa.<sup>27</sup> This chapter assesses the causes of these coups in West Africa and their effect on democracy. The treatment extends to whatever positive political role the military has played.

#### Internal Factors

Generally, the accepted mission of a nation's armed forces is national security and survival, specifically preventing an attack by another nation state. Additionally, nations have used armed forces for power projection and interventions in pursuit of foreign policies. The maintenance of domestic tranquility in most democratic states is the responsibility of the civil police. In West Africa, however, military forces are not strong enough to attack other nations. Instead political leaders see the national armed forces as "a mark of sovereignty"<sup>28</sup> and use them more for internal defense security, and internal pacification, all of which roles bring the armed forces into domestic political disputes. Enforcement of unpopular governmental policies strains the military and jeopardizes neutrality and subordination to regimes creating tension and instability. As a result, a frequent cause of coups in West African nations is the operational "mission" assigned military forces. In Ghana, for instance, General Acheampong in 1978 used troops to restore law and order when there were serious agitations and demonstrations against the highly unpopular military cum civilian type of government he tried to impose on the country. It was during this period that General Fred Akuffo overthrew the Acheampong regime in a palace coup. A few months later, in 1979 Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings deposed General Akuffo in a bloody coup d'etat. This trend toward military intervention is confirmed by Welch and Smith who hold the view that the "likelihood of military intervention rises should the armed forces become heavily involved in primary domestic, police-type or counterinsurgency activities."<sup>29</sup> They also note that available evidence suggests that coups rarely occur in nations involved in



international conflicts. This observation seems to fit West African armed forces because they generally, despite recent peacekeeping operations, do not discharge international assignments.

Distinctive organizational features of the armed forces include unique attributes like esprit de corps, discipline, chain of command, and a sense of self sufficiency, all of which increase the propensity for political intervention. Together these characteristics are the foundation for a very cohesive force which emphasizes the entire institution rather than the individual. Although cohesion is crucial for an armed force to achieve its mission in battle, too much emphasis on it can result in separatism, elitism and create a distinct social unit that provides fertile grounds for coups. Too much cohesion results in soldiers obeying orders even to the detriment of due political processes.

Another organizational characteristic of the West African military is insistence on the right to exercise autonomy in internal organization and operations. Any attempt to alter the policy prerogatives of the armed forces encourages resentment that can lead to coups d'etat. According to S. E. Finer, the military is jealous of its corporate status and privileges. Anxiety to preserve its autonomy provides one of the most widespread and powerful motives for intervention. Decalo is of the same view when he states that Lieutenant Moussa Traore's 1966 coup in Mali was motivated by intrusions into the army's corporate monopoly of force (by militant armed youth formations) coupled with moves to unseat the incumbent chiefs of staff.<sup>30</sup> Welch and Smith assert that the creation in Ghana of the President's Own Guard led to resentment and inter service rivalries causing "regular" officers to oust Nkrumah's government in 1966.<sup>31</sup>

Increased professionalism of the officer corps of the army is another cause of coups in West African nations. Huntington explains that members of a profession like the officer corps combine expertise, corporate solidarity and social responsibilities, attributes which make them more than just an assemblage of competent job holders. Professionalism in the officer corps of West African armies is partly achieved through the conduct of advanced training in the military

academies in their countries or elsewhere, especially in France, Britain, the USA, and until recently the Soviet Union.<sup>32</sup> Today most officers have good educations before joining the military. In Nigeria, for instance, all officers earn a bachelor's degree during the four years of cadet training they receive at their military academy. Ghana and some other West African nations encourage civilians with degrees to join the military. Finer and Bengt Abrahamson are of the view that education itself contributes to a predisposition for coups. They assert that "the more advanced the training of officers, the more insistent will be the pressures on members of the armed forces to entangle themselves in politics."<sup>33</sup>

The reason well-educated military officers in most Western countries do not intervene in politics is that members of the armed forces have internalized the concept of military subordination to civilian political leadership. No army can be fully divorced from politics, considerations and activity, but the important issue is understanding the role and degree of participation. High ranking military officers often work within the confines of political structures and understand the system better. This explains why senior officers are rarely active leaders of coups. The senior officer is more likely to be brought in as a figurehead when ambitious young officers seize political control. At the same time, the younger officers do not participate in decision making or lack channels to voice their grievances. It is not strange therefore that the most recent coups in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Niger, and Mali were led by officers below the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. For example, although young Majors, led by Murtala Mohammed, staged Nigeria's 1966 coup, but gave the mantle of power to General Gowon to rule the nation.<sup>34</sup>

Apart from these organizational factors there are some conspirators who are usually linked to social forces opposed to the regime. Martin Needler writing on military interventions in Africa claimed that, "almost invariably, the conspirators are in touch with civilian politicians and respond to their advice, counting on their assistance in justifying the coup to public opinion and helping to run the country afterwards."<sup>35</sup> These civilians sometimes encourage coup plotters

but their role later becomes more apparent when they take up important cabinet positions and as a result help create some semblance of legitimacy for the military regime. For instance, after General Abacha of Nigeria took over power in 1993 and locked up Chief Abiola, who had won the annulled elections, some members of the opposition and of Abiola's own party broke ranks and joined Abacha's government.

Samuel Huntington argues that one significant factor affecting the military's propensity to intervene is the political institutions' capacity to meet expectations engendered by rapid social mobilization. According to Huntington the indicators of social mobilization include urbanization, literacy, newspaper circulation, higher education, and the availability of radios and television. Governments that are unable to address the needs created by the rapid urbanization easily become unpopular. This is precisely the problem that faces politicians in West Africa, where the social mobilization is so rapid that, governments, which are unable to satisfy concomitant demands, fall prey to conspirators. Unfortunately, the availability of mass media has enabled people to see the good things of life, making them look to their political leaders to provide similar amenities.

Another significant social threat to elected West African governments is economic in nature. Poor economic policies and the attendant instability have engendered a poverty cycle that seems unbreakable: poor economic policies contribute to poverty, which results in instability, which also causes disruptions in the economy, which, in turn cause more poverty. Poor economic policies include inadequate revenue generating measures, unchecked printing of currencies, unnecessary subsidizing of products, bad monetary policies and a general lack of concern for the ordinary man. These conditions are worsened by corruption among West African political leaders. Whatever the cause, the results are a huge debt burden, flight of domestic capital, high inflation and disappearance of new loans and investments all of which to significant declines in real domestic product per capita. Because of widespread unemployment, and drastic slashes in domestic budgets, most West African regimes no longer merit support since they can

no longer carry out their responsibilities. In Nigeria, for example, successive regimes have failed to use the huge oil revenue to reshape or expand the country's economic base. Oil remains Nigeria's most significant source of income. In addition, corruption, greed, and pervasive mismanagement have resulted in steep declines in agricultural and industrial production, leading to the collapse of government services and swelling foreign debt. In essence, civilian governments easily lose legitimacy, thus creating conditions for successful military coups. This trend fits Eric Nordlinger's assertion that "legitimacy deflation may facilitate interventionism."<sup>36</sup> The prevalence of such societal maladies has triggered the indignant rebellion of military leaders under anti corruption crusading-banners like Ghana's Jerry Rawlings and Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara. Indeed, corruption has been cited by coup leaders like Moussa Troare in Mali, Strasser in Sierra Leone, Kerekou in Dahomey. Allegations of corruption also figured in the ouster of Ould Daddah in Mauritania.<sup>37</sup>

Ethnic conflicts are another major cause of military interventions in West Africa. Both civilian and military leaders have tended to create loyalty pyramids within their ethnically split armies, and these pyramids have resulted in interventions. For example, in Benin every time a Northern group rose to power it purged the army's top Fon and Yoruba officers and promoted Northerners into the administration. When Siaka Stevens of Sierra Leone was installed president, he made sure the officer corps was more sympathetic toward him. Bayo Adekanye asserted that the "formation of an officer corps ... was ethnically and in political orientation considered to be sympathetic to the Siaka Stevens government."<sup>38</sup>

Coups d'etat characteristically occur in states marked by low levels of political legitimacy in which, according to Huntington, no political institution, or corps of professional political leaders are recognized or accepted as legitimate intermediaries to moderate group conflict.<sup>39</sup> There is political decay and little or no political order. Huntington correctly paints the prevailing political picture by stating that, "in effect the wealthy bribe, students riot, workers strike, mobs demonstrate and the military coup."<sup>40</sup> In West Africa, factors which have eroded

political legitimacy include the lack of respect for democracy by the nationalist leaders and the prevalence of authoritarian rule.

Soon after independence, the failure of most nationalist leaders to cultivate democracy encouraged military interventions. A leading African historian has argued that most of these leaders accepted democratic elections as a means to an end, a vehicle or condition for independence. In the words of Michael Crowder, "It is clear that for all but a few leaders ... the commitment to liberal democracy was a transitory one."<sup>41</sup> What happened was a gradual erosion of democracy, which in turn was matched by the undemocratic behavior of the opposition as well. A typical example can be found in Ghana, when Dr. Nkrumah decided to adopt a one party system of socialist government soon after independence. As Nkrumah pursued a more socialist path, indebtedness and public discontent intensified. Colonel Kotoka and other conspirators, therefore, found it very easy to justify Nkrumah's overthrow in 1966.

Authoritarian rule by political rulers has been another cause for interventions in West Africa nations. John Johnson, a history professor at Stanford University, claims that there is a tendency in societies of the new states (like those in West Africa) for authority to be hierarchical and sacral. He further adds that the undeveloped nature of the infrastructure encourages the silence of the countryside in matters of day to day political concern. He concludes that the tradition of hierarchical authority creates a situation which is itself a temptation for the military to arrogate power to themselves.<sup>42</sup> Once again, Colonel Kotoka felt justified in overthrowing Nkrumah because he claimed he was ridding Ghana of a "pretentious authoritarian leader."<sup>43</sup> According to Jon Klaus the "abuses of power were marked by Nkrumah and the Convention Peoples Party (ruling party) claim to power and political choice, arbitrary government, and increasingly repressive laws and actions."<sup>44</sup>

Although Decalo agrees that all the factors enumerated above contributed to West African military interventions, he argues that the strongest and probably most credible cause is personal motives of ambitious or discontented officers. He asserts that ambition, fear, greed, and

vanity have catapulted military leaders into power, either by exploiting the deflation of political legitimacy, or by manipulating the powerlessness of most politicians to defend themselves from assaults.<sup>45</sup> He cited Lieutenant A. Samuel's revelation during his trial for an attempted coup in Accra in 1967, that he wanted to be the first lieutenant in Africa to capture the presidency. Also, Decalo infers that Colonel Maurice Kouandete's several coups in Benin were for personal reasons because Maurice did not cite even one policy innovation for the nation during an organized interview in 1972.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, there is what has been described as "umpire" or "arbitrator" coups, in which the army is compelled to "mediate between deadlocked competing civilian cliques."<sup>47</sup> For example, in 1965 General Christopher Soglo claimed he intervened in Benin because of the bitter quarrel between President Sourou-Migan Apithy and Vice-President Justin Ahomadegbe. According to BBC reports the recent coup in Niger was also the result of the bitter tug of war between the President and the Vice-President.

#### External Factors

Although external factors also cause coups they have generally not figured in West African coups. There have been a few instances in which external factors have played a decisive role in local situations. Decalo, for instance, correctly points out that there have been no coups in Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Gabon because of the thorough awareness that any coup bid would be instantly reversed by the French force of arms actually stationed in their home cities, as in Libreville (Gabon) in 1963. The French were directly involved in Bangui's 1979 coup when they flew in Dacko to become the head of state. The magazine WEST AFRICA has noted that "General Samuel Doe would not survive long in Monrovia without the backing of Washington."<sup>48</sup>

Proximity is an additional consideration. Coups in West Africa tend to be highly contagious, especially between Ghana and Nigeria. For instance, there were coups in both

countries in 1966, followed by Ghana's 1981 coup and the corresponding one in Nigeria in 1983. President Shagari was so conscious of the contagiousness of coups in West Africa that to discourage the disease, he reduced vital oil supplies to Ghana after the Rawlings 1981 coup<sup>49</sup> and also cut off diplomatic ties with Liberia when Sergeant Samuel Doe took over in 1980.

#### Recurrence of Coups

Apart from these internal and external factors presented, one reason military interventions have become a primary concern in West Africa is their chronic frequency. Bayo Adekanye asserts that it is rare for the process of demilitarization to lead to any stable pattern of civilian rule. He cites the return to power by the military in Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone to support his case. One reason coups tend to repeat themselves is the creation of contending social groups with opposing interests after the military's return to barracks. Among these contending groups, he claims, are members of the military who observe the lifestyle change of officers associated with the previous coup. The disadvantaged see another coup as an opportunity for self advancement and for rapid upward mobility.<sup>50</sup>

Secondly, there is also the existence of business interests that are pro-military because they prospered under the previous military regime. Military governments often introduce programs of indigenization providing for statutory levels of African participation in the control and ownership of certain types of enterprise. In Ghana, under General Acheampong, this development resulted in the creation of a bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the comprador middle class;<sup>51</sup> and in Nigeria under Gowon, Murtala, and Obasanjo, there were opportunities for indigenous businessmen to purchase stakes in various foreign undertakings with the assistance of public loans.<sup>52</sup> With the end of military rule, incoming politicians try to create a new economic clientele in order to revive pre-military patterns of support and in the process offend others (the newly created business class). This offended class naturally solicits sympathizers (sometimes using money) within the military to stage another intervention. In Nigeria, the courts in 1982 convicted Alhaji Mandara, a businessman, for exhibiting this kind of motive.<sup>53</sup>

Thirdly, the opposition party members who lose out in the contest to succeed the outgoing military regime start working against incumbents for various reasons, including regional, ethnic, religious. Adekanye explains that such an attitude is unique to West African politics in which one party's win means a feast, as against the loser whose situation is compared to famine. Consequently such disgruntled politicians sometimes condone coups as was the case in Nigeria in 1979.<sup>54</sup>

One of the most potent social forces, however, which encourages the return of the military are the urban unemployed. These are made up of unskilled, primary and secondary school graduates (equivalent of high school graduates) and dropouts, gangsters, beggars, ex-servicemen, and slum-dwellers. Such groups are highly volatile and easily mobilizable, with high susceptibility to the appeals of Bonapartism.<sup>55</sup> This disenfranchised segment of West African society tends to prefer the reign of force to constitutionalism, even though they are aware of the shortcomings of military rule. The initial spontaneous support that greets a coup announcement evidently comes from elements of this group, thereby granting the conspirators some semblance of legitimacy.

Further analysis of these factors shows that post-military regimes (or restoration governments), being very conscious of the possible return to power of soldiers, frequently re-direct or waste their efforts at containing the threat from the armed forces. Thus, post-military regimes are side tracked from the more urgent economic priorities which need to be addressed. This constant fear of once again losing out to the military again results in a politics of survival characterized by a concern to amass wealth quickly and by the application of stratagems to hang on to power.<sup>56</sup>

Ghana is a case in point. In 1972 Prime Minister Busia was overthrown by Lieutenant Colonel I. K. Acheampong, only two years after he won the organized elections. In 1979, Flight Lieutenant Rawlings overthrew President Hilla Limann during Limann's second year in power. In fact, Rawlings refused to accept Limann government's offer of a foreign course or an



ambassadorial appointment.<sup>57</sup> In the case of Nigeria, President Shagari's use of the federal constitution and across the board salary increases of 300 naira per annum for all categories of military officers did not prevent General Babangida from taking over in 1983.<sup>58</sup>

#### Positive Political Role

Long before it became acceptable for military forces in West Africa to directly intervene in domestic politics, soldiers have performed important functions in their societies. Johnson says that soldiers who returned to Africa after participating in World War II became agents of the great transformation that is still in progress in Africa. These returning veterans were exposed to experiences (learning to read, speak, write European languages and become aware of modern sanitation and health practices) which served to broaden their horizons and knowledge. At home these veterans became agents of acculturation and a new stimulus in agitation for modernity. Not surprisingly, in Ghana, Nigeria, and most of the French territories, veterans assumed key roles in the growth of postwar nationalism.<sup>59</sup>

The governments of Ghana, Guinea, Mali also organized workers' brigades for veterans and unemployed youths. These brigades were organized similar to the 1930's Civilian Conservation Corps in the USA.<sup>60</sup> In addition to fulfilling construction and agricultural purposes, these brigades served as sources of employment for most youths in the three nations.

The armed forces have also performed essential internal security and international duties. Most West African armies are employed for ceremonial duties like organizing parades on important national days or when international dignitaries are visiting. These and similar manifestations help the new West African states to forge a sense of nationhood in the political psyche of the people. Internal security duties include maintaining law and order. Among the numerous examples of internal security roles is the Nigerian army's success in defeating insurgents to preserve the territorial integrity of the nation during the Biafra civil war. The Senegalese army currently plays a prominent role in containing the Casamance rebellion. The

internal security role of the military forces in West African nations is clearly evidenced by their deployment in all the regional capitals of each country. The units so deployed have the internal security responsibility to maintain law and order in the regions they occupy.

It is also important to note the indirect but very important role the militaries in West African nations play in the area of food security. The secure environment provided in the nations allows individual farmers to cultivate food to feed the people. Despite the fact that there are conflicts in the region, which do not augur well for food security, it can be said that this role has been an essential one in times of peace. In any case, not all the West African nations are embroiled in conflict at the same time.

The armies in West Africa have also played a significant role in international peacekeeping operations. Ghanaian soldiers, for example, have participated in UN peacekeeping operations since the time when Ghana took part in UN efforts to resolve the Congo crisis in the 1960s. Nigeria is presently leading a West African effort to settle the on going conflict in Liberia. Nicknamed ECOMOG (ECOMOG stands for Economic Community for West African States Monitoring Group. The name has been retained though the force has now been augmented with troops from Uganda and Tanzania) this force deployed into Liberia in 1990, with Ghana, Guinea, Gambia, and Sierra Leone being the other contributing countries. Senegal also contributed troops in the past, but has currently withdrawn her forces.

Though West African armies are known to be small in size they have and continue to play a major role in the defense of their territories against attacks from neighboring countries. There is little doubt that the presence of the armies has served as deterrence and has compelled nations to resolve their conflicts amicably rather than resorting to the use of force.

In spite of the fact that military forces in West African nations have played positive political roles in the past, the current tendency to arrogate power to themselves continues to be a serious obstacle to the evolution and growth of democracy. Apart from having proved themselves good administrators and politicians, the suddenness and violence that characterize

their involvement in politics create panic and fear among elected political leaders causing them to commit mistakes and concentrate most of their energies on matters which do not directly help in solving the numerous economic problems confronting them. This tendency continues to weaken the political system, making it easy to overthrow. Despite the presence of organizational and socio-political environmental factors to explain the frequency of coups in West African nations, it is becoming increasingly clear that personal ambitions, vanity and greed are the real motives for coups, except for a few instances where interventions have been for genuine and altruistic reasons. It is almost impossible to justify coups. The incompetence of political leaders can partly be corrected if the populace (voters) is given the chance to decide its preference in regular and fairly contested party elections. Armies in other parts of the world have realized this and have avoided directly intervening in politics, thereby contributing to a successful political process.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Case Studies

West Africa is not the only region in the world that has experienced the turbulence caused by military intervention in domestic politics. Military regimes rose to power in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s, but they were replaced by civilian governments in the 1980 and 90s. Such unprecedented transformation was indeed in line with similar movements toward democracy in Eastern Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Similar movements along this democratic road have, however, not been very successful in West Africa for reasons discussed in the previous chapters. This chapter looks at trends in Brazil, Venezuela, and Spain, and, using three case studies, assesses how the military has been coping with civilian control to facilitate stability and the growth of democracy. The first two case studies are from Latin America, specifically the examples of Brazil and Venezuela. The third case study examines the role of the armed forces in the growth of democracy in Spain.

### Reasons for selection of Latin American countries and Spain

Several Latin America countries provide useful insight into the internal dynamics of civil-military relations. Civil-military relations, as in West Africa, have been shaped by internal rather than external factors. Between 1979 and 1991 fourteen Latin American countries replaced military dictatorships or military dominated regimes with elected governments.<sup>61</sup> However, virtually all of these elected governments have had to contend with some degree of influence exercised by the armed forces.

Like most other regions of the third world, Latin America is also going through a period of modernization defined as

development in progression from limiting poverty to emancipating wealth, from passive ignorance to creative knowledge, from stagnant personal isolation to constructive social cooperation, and from humiliating authoritarianism to dignifying self government.<sup>62</sup>

The modernization effort has simultaneously assumed economic and political dimensions. Lack of resources has, however, compelled some Latin American governments to borrow practices from the developed, modern West. Some Latin American political leaders believe academicians like John Johnson, who argues that while modernization is taking place, the armed forces can be constructive, and that an expanded role for them would not be dangerous because they cannot afford to deploy much coercive force against civil society.<sup>63</sup>

Another similarity is the fact that most Latin American armed forces face no immediate threat of a major conflict. Their primary role appears to be that of a political arbiter and upholder of public order. This no doubt is typical of all praetorian states where the armed forces are not far from the seats of power and often occupy them.

Historically, Latin American civilian and military leaders have not trusted each other. The frequent military ascension to power has often been motivated by a perceived need to save the nation from weak, corrupt, and undisciplined civilian leadership. The civilian leaders on the other hand, like their counterparts in West Africa, believe that civilian efforts at making government responsible to the wider population have been thwarted by a self important military that has forged an unholy alliance with local oligarchies.<sup>64</sup>

The legacy of the independence struggle in Latin America presents another similarity to West Africa in that the early military establishments of Latin America were also traditional. The independence struggle gave rise to political leaders whose claims to power were determined by their personal control of the military. Soldiers and officers were largely amateurs who with time could not meet the needs of a modernizing state. Inspired by other modern states like Germany,

France, and Great Britain, Latin American countries began to establish professional officer corps, the members of which, unlike in the past, were not drawn solely from the elite class. The professional officer corps over time managed to secure a significant degree of institutional autonomy, thus becoming a caste unto itself. It is important to note, that just like the case of West African armies, these officers tended to represent the interests of the middle class, probably because they were no longer drawn from the elite. The nature of doing business in the military and the character of its organization set it apart from social classes. The military developed its own views of the world and politics and became quite capable of playing a political role.<sup>65</sup>

It is necessary to add that the most obvious military political role has been the coup d'etat, though there have been other forms of direct and indirect influence. In the early part of the twentieth century military intervention seemed to promote changes which were beneficial to the interests of the middle class, but the military shifted its emphasis to thwart developments it did not like. Using what Samuel Huntington has called "veto coups", the military intervened either to remove socialists, middle class radicals, or Peronists from power or to prevent them from assuming power because, in the military's eyes, they threatened either the military's sectoral interests or the national interests.<sup>66</sup>

In addition, Latin American countries have not been successful in creating organizations that promote regional cooperation. Organizations like the Latin American Free Trade Association, the Latin American Economic System, and the Central American Common Market have all been stillborn.<sup>67</sup> A similar situation exists in West Africa where attempts at regional cooperation through the creation of ECOWAS have been unsuccessful. (ECOWAS stands for Economic Community of West African States made up of the 16 states in the sub region. Some West African nations have for instance refused to participate in the peacekeeping efforts to resolve the conflict in Liberia). In both cases regionalism has failed because of national self interest. The problem of scarce resources has resulted in neighboring countries becoming antagonists or competitors rather than allies. Current trends, especially with the cooperation

displayed in running ECOMOG and Latin America's adhoc cooperation efforts through mechanisms like the Rio Group, show the realization that conflict is unnecessary.

Although vastly different from any West African country, the dismantling of Spain's military authoritarian regime and the establishment of a democratic one by peaceful, consensual, and legal means made a study of that country very relevant to this research because that is precisely what this research aims at achieving. From 1939 until General Francisco Franco's death in 1975, Spain was ruled as a military dictatorship.<sup>68</sup> Since then, Spain's armed forces have not intervened directly in the nation's domestic politics but have instead contributed very positively to democracy's growth and in fact prevented a coup d'etat on 28 February 1981.<sup>69</sup> It would be significant if, like Spain, the militaries in West African countries, are able to quell coup attempts until coups generally become unacceptable and unfashionable.

The measures Spain employed to prevent the military from intervening in domestic politics appear useful for possible application in West African countries. Equally relevant to the research are the methods Spain used to keep the military in barracks. In Spain, the military not only withdrew from politics but maintained a definitive neutrality which explains the abstinence from direct domestic political intervention.

## Brazil

The most important political question in Brazil today is whether political democracy will survive, with analysts constantly fearing the possibility of military intervention. This fear exists in spite of the fact that the Brazilian military has avoided direct political intervention since 1985.<sup>70</sup> The notion that the military might soon intervene stems from the current political difficulties of economic mismanagement (especially corruption, high inflationary rates and recurrent strikes) which confront the nation. Some individuals are now inclined to believe that democracy is inefficient and tend to prefer the authoritarian alternative.<sup>71</sup> This case study will

determine what structures have kept the Brazilian military from directly intervening in the political process while simultaneously contributing to the success of democracy.

For Brazil, the foremost reason for non-intervention has been the way that transition to civilian rule was organized. The military controlled the transition process in a manner to retain some ability to influence events immediately after the handover. According to Zagorski, the transitional period was five years. This allowed the armed forces to retain their reputation of power and set the stage for the attempt to consolidate democracy.<sup>72</sup>

Equally important as part of the transition process was the passage of the amnesty law in Brazil, which essentially prevented older charges of murder from being raised against military personnel. Under this law no military officer has been indicted for any crime committed during the period of military government. No military personnel were purged, expelled or punished.<sup>73</sup>

Military reform has also greatly facilitated the Brazilian army's restraint. The program for reform was initiated during the final years of military government in the 1990s; including implementation of Land Force 1990, known as Task Force-90 (TF-90). The program, directed at improving the army's capability in the frontier region, included the reorganization of commands and the creation of a rapid reaction force and an army aviation element. This program enabled the military to extend control over border regions hitherto largely neglected. It also allowed the military to exercise dominance over the northern border region from Colombia to Guyana, an area 1400 miles in length and 100 miles deep,<sup>74</sup> where foreign insurgents from Venezuela and Surinam had established guerrilla bases. The Brazilian military also undertook a nuclear program that is presently occupied with developing nuclear energy for both military and civilian uses. These measures have to a very large extent both helped in the modernization and restructuring of the armed forces and created a connection between military and civilian society.

The potential for the military's modernization and reform is further strengthened by the National Defense College at the University of Campinas.<sup>75</sup> There, civilian sources and instructors play a significant role in shaping the ideology of military graduates and assisting in



their self-definition and perceived political roles.<sup>76</sup> These reforms allow civilian authorities to acquire sufficient knowledge and understanding of military affairs to formulate viable and credible military policies.<sup>77</sup> Such institutional efforts also serve as the start point for future regional cooperative military research and development work ensuring that the armed forces' energies are not wasted in governmental-political projects.<sup>78</sup>

With Brazil's long history of military rule, it was hard to achieve civilian control of the armed forces. To assure some semblance of civilian control of the military without creating tension and irritation within the military, the strategy of civil-military coexistence was adopted. This strategy works best in countries where the government appears to enjoy some degree of support from society at large.<sup>79</sup> In Brazil this approach was especially effective during the initial stages of President Sarney's term of office, when he was very popular. Coexistence assumes civilians can have more ability to take the initiative in areas of marginal interest to the military. Civilian rule can be consolidated while placating the military and forestalling interventions. It is anticipated that this gradual process will result in the military fulfilling its democratic duty of subordination and obedience to elected officials. A firmer policy of civilian control as it exists in the USA and other developed nations may eventually replace the strategy of coexistence.

The Brazilian military has also modified some of its functions; the number of operatives in the military intelligence community was decreased while emphasizing the external and border security missions. Meanwhile, the military concentrated its involvement in the production of military equipment, which has now, incidentally, become a major Brazilian export industry. By the end of the 1980s, Brazil's military industrial complex employed about 200,000 workers with an estimated value of \$12 to \$15 billion.<sup>80</sup> The industrial complex manufactured equipment both for domestic use and export and also helped develop a shared symbiotic relationship with private corporate interests. Even more important is the fact that the accruing arms-export earnings evidently contributed immensely to improving Brazil's balance of payments.

Brazilian armed forces also contribute to stability and, therefore, to democracy through their domestic internal security role. The Brazilian military broadly defines internal security problems to include terrorism, subversion, and insurgencies. Although this security function protects democratic governments, Alexandre Barros argues that it could lead to the militarization of politics and the expansion of military roles because it allows the assumption of governmental functions by the armed forces and thereby raises the possibility of subversion of the political process. Counterinsurgency roles require the involvement of the military in domestic intelligence gathering to meet the required tasks which include "conducting psychological operations that target the country's own population; population and resource control (normally police functions); and civic action (service activities provided by the armed forces to the local community)."<sup>81</sup> There is little doubt that the need for counterinsurgency operations is very important in Latin America. President Collor de Mello found a way out by reducing the extent of the military's involvement in domestic affairs by disbanding the military-dominated National Intelligence Service and replacing it with the civilian controlled Secretaria de Assantos Estrategicos (SAE). Additionally, the old Escola Nacional de Informacoes was transformed into an academy for training intelligence technicians.<sup>82</sup> It is hoped that the military's views on internal security will gradually be modified when there is no serious threat of political violence over an extended period. In the interim, the military's involvement in domestic internal security matters is probably unavoidable until civilian political leaders are able to train more experts to fill that role. In actual insurgencies, however, civilian authorities still have to take the initiative to direct and shape the military's response.

#### Venezuela

Like Brazil, there is uncertainty about whether the Venezuelan armed forces will once again intervene in the domestic politics of the nation in spite of the fact that the military last got

involved in local politics in 1958. There are evidently very cogent reasons why the Venezuelan military has refrained from such interventions.

The Venezuelan armed forces created the Institute of Higher Studies of National Defense (IAEDEN) which incidentally has civilian participation both at the student and faculty levels.<sup>83</sup> This institute was involved in the discussions directed toward the formulation of a new law adapted to Venezuelan democratic institutions.

Party politics in Venezuela have played a role in fostering improved civil-military relations through a system of mutual interdependence. Promotions above the rank of colonel are the responsibility of the President and Congress, which results in senior officers identifying with one of the two main parties as a means of assuring their careers. Although this practice appears divisive it has, so far, worked well in Venezuela, especially since it has not led to the promotion of any incompetent officers.<sup>84</sup>

Meanwhile, the Venezuelan military undertook development programs, including the navy's role in the construction of an aqueduct for the island of Margarita and the army's building of highways in remote areas. The armed forces in general also organized welfare programs, including vaccination campaigns and dental health services for the poor and emergency or disaster relief roles.<sup>85</sup> All these contributed to stability in the country as well as improving the image of the military in the eyes of the civilian population.

The Venezuelan military also focused on its internal security mission by containing the guerrilla threat from the Left in the 1970s. The government took the opportunity to better equip the soldiers, a move that was institutionally important because it gave the troops requisite job satisfaction. When the guerilla threat vanished, the military's attention shifted to new roles like "maintaining its preparation and responsibility for the stability of democratic institutions."<sup>86</sup> This new role was displayed by the Venezuelan military in February 1989, when it intervened to restore law and order after two days of nationwide rioting had brought the country to the brink of collapse and anarchy. The harsh measures the military employed to restore order were

explained by their commanders as necessary because the military was "acting on behalf of Venezuela's democratic system, which they were committed to safeguard."<sup>87</sup>

## Spain

The most striking method employed in Spain to keep the military in barracks after General Franco's death was the positive attitude of the civilian political leadership toward the military. Civilian leaders facilitated the integration of the armed forces into the political system instead of merely seeking their political neutrality.<sup>88</sup> The civilian government formulated military promotions policy to put reformist military elements in key positions. Due to the sensitivity of such a move, the government sought the collaboration of certain prestigious elements which were concerned about the future of the armed forces. These prestigious military men were those who had taken part in the civil war on Franco's side and whose careers had therefore prospered.<sup>89</sup> This policy confirmed Rustow's theory that:

Many of the current theories about democracy seem to imply that to promote democracy you must first foster democrats. . . . Instead, we should allow for the possibility that circumstances may force, trick, lure, or cajole non-democratics into democratic behavior and that their beliefs may adjust in due course by some process of rationalization or adaptation.<sup>90</sup>

A Royal Decree promulgated on 8 February 1977 forbade political and union activities within the armed forces, while a second article affirmed that those who in a professional capacity formed part of the armed forces were not to accept and hold public office, attend any public meeting of a political nature, express publicly opinions of a political or union nature or be affiliated to or support any political party except the right of active suffrage.<sup>91</sup> Military personnel seeking political appointments were to request release from the armed forces. Spain also stripped the police forces of their military functions by passing the Law of State Security Forces in 1986. The Civil Guard was given a special military status only so that military courts could no longer try crimes committed against the guard by civilians, as was the case in the past. Instead, these crimes were to come under ordinary jurisdiction.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, civilians now

head the law enforcement agencies, positions traditionally held by military men, making it easier for the government to control their activities.

Spain also took steps to professionalize the armed forces to make the military "the tool of the state."<sup>93</sup> According to Huntington, professionalism is the best means of achieving objective civilian control over the military forces: "Civilian control in the objective sense is that distribution of political power between military and civilian groups which is most conducive to the emergence of professional attitudes and behavior among the members of the officers' corps."<sup>94</sup> To realize this, the military chain of command was removed from the political-administrative sphere and all three military ministries (army, navy, air force) were grouped under a single Ministry of Defense. The creation of the ministry reinforced the government's authority and enhanced the professional autonomy of the armed forces.<sup>95</sup>

Enhancing further the neutrality of the Spanish armed forces, the government provided adequate budgetary support by approving a five year program designed to modernize the forces' war-fighting capability.<sup>96</sup> This decision was crucial, giving the civilian leadership a significant means of influencing the future organization of the armed forces. According to Claude Welch:

Officers urging returns to the barracks do so in part in the expectation that the successor civilian governments will treat the armed forces well, both as gestures of goodwill and as insurance against further intervention and subsequent achievement of neutrality in politics are eased by increases in armed forces budget allocation.<sup>97</sup>

As part of the professionalization of the armed forces, external defense was emphasized at the expense of traditional concern for the enemy from within. This emphasis on external defense was further boosted by Spain's joining of NATO in 1981. The new external defense emphasis strengthened the importance of the navy and the air force at the expense of the army, thus decentralizing military power in the country. Welch observed that:

The roles armed forces are called upon to play directly and clearly affect their political involvement. . . . The initial decision and process of disengagement are thus eased by a redirection of military mission towards classic defense duties.<sup>98</sup>

In addition, NATO membership resulted in the improvement of civilian expertise in military affairs while providing the government with an alternate source of information. It allowed the government to justify many of the reforms by arguing that NATO membership required the technical upgrading of the three services.

In all three case studies it is clear that much attention was paid to creating new roles for the military forces. The importance of such roles is summarized by Alexandre Barros in his remarks that if such roles are not found for the military,

society will continue to live with a group of professionals who have the same resources for the management of violence as their counterparts in the developed countries . . . but who do not perform traditional military roles.<sup>99</sup>

He concludes that the lack of legitimate functions for the military is a serious political threat to political stability in Third World countries.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Analysis and Conclusion

A number of very interesting and useful observations and prescriptions have clearly emerged from the case-studies. In spite of their obvious diversity, Spain, Brazil, and Venezuela offer similarities in measures taken to prevent their militaries from directly intervening in domestic politics while positively contributing to the growth of democracy. However, one must hasten to add that the success of these measures elsewhere does not necessarily imply that they will achieve the same results in West African states. Nonetheless, what makes the case studies relevant is the fact that all three countries experienced military authoritarianism and are currently making attempts at modernization (though to varying degrees of success). It is also pertinent to note the apprehension in all three over whether political democracy will survive, with analysts fearing the return to power of the armed forces. A number of measures were shown to have been taken in the case studies, but only a few will be analyzed to assess their suitability in the West Africa context. The measures deemed appropriate fall into two distinct groups. The first category includes "restraint measures" aimed at keeping the armed forces in the barracks and maintaining their neutrality in domestic politics. The second category includes the more active role envisioned as part of the military's positive "contributions to democracy."

### Restraint Measures

One important step taken in Brazil was to permit the military to share control during the five-year transitional period. The Brazilian military retained some power, which allowed it not only to directly influence events for a time, but also to retain its reputation. These departures

freed the country from any military intervention and consequently facilitated the consolidation of democracy. Among the measures taken was the amnesty law, which reduced animosities and tension between the military and civilian politicians.

During Spain's transitional period, the civilian leadership aimed at facilitating the integration of the armed forces into the political system instead of merely seeking their political neutrality. Civilians achieved this partly by incorporating prestigious military personnel into the reform program. The prestige of these military men was essential to weather the initial storms that characterize every experiment.

At the same time Spain took steps to ensure the well being of the soldiers in spite of the prevailing national economic hardship. Such a policy served as an insurance against further disruptive intervention by the military and was therefore worth the extra cost. A similar measure was instituted in Venezuela, where officers' salaries were raised to compare with their US counterparts. It is fair to assume that this policy contributed to an effective transition because both Spain and Venezuela have not experienced any interventions since the last military regimes handed over power to elected civilian leaders over thirty years ago.

Nigeria's Shehu Shagari was less successful when he applied almost the same policy in his country because his was a one-time measure which he failed to sustain over a period of time. Additionally, unlike in Latin American countries, enlisted personnel or Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) in West African nations take active part in military interventions. Examples of Sergeant Doe in Liberia and Sergeant Akata Pore of Ghana readily come to mind.<sup>100</sup> Baffour Agyeman Duah confirms this by indicating in an article on West African military coups that Nigerian civilian leadership "abhorred the precedent of lower ranks rising up to overthrow senior officers."<sup>101</sup> Consequently, raising the salaries of only officers will not have the desired effect of preventing military interventions. For the policy to be efficacious, the salaries of enlisted personnel should be raised as well.



The pains that Brazil took, for instance, during their transition period should be of interest to all West African countries as they do not seem to follow similar steps during their transitions to civilian rule. The trend is for the military to hastily hand over political power to civilian authorities and return to barracks. Without a transitional plan or phased return to civilian authority, it is not surprising that the recurrence of coups d'etat is so great within the region. For example, in his first intervention in the domestic politics of Ghana in June 1979, Rawlings handed over power to a civilian elected government within six months of the overthrow of the previous civilian regime. The regime's spokesman is indeed quoted as having said that "we don't intend to stay in power . . . it's a house cleaning exercise. The soldiers must go back to the barracks and behave like soldiers."<sup>102</sup> The six months included the period for the formation of political parties and the holding of elections. As already seen, Rawlings again overthrew Limann's elected civilian regime two years after the hand over. In Nigeria, there was a longer transitional period of about five years, though it still proved inadequate because no effort went into ensuring a smooth return of power to the civilian leadership. Babangida in 1991 decided to annul the results of the elections allegedly because it was feared that Chief Abiola, who emerged the winner, would victimize some segments of Nigerian society. However if the military had drawn up a more elaborate transitional program, fundamental problems similar to the Abiola case would probably not have come about but would have been foreseen and handled in a more mature manner. At the moment, the current head of state of Nigeria General Abacha, who took over from General Babangida, finds himself in a fix, having to contend with not only virtual civil disobedience on the domestic front, but also with limited international sanctions. All these incidents further erode the belief and confidence the ordinary man has for the West African politician (whether military or civilian). It is needless to add that without the support or confidence of the people it will be difficult for the politician to achieve anything for his country; the result is more instability.

The promotion of relevant military reform also greatly helped the military's stay in the barracks. In Brazil, it took the form of implementing TF-90. This involved the reorganization of commands and the creation of units that enabled the Brazilian armed forces to extend their control over border areas. The Brazilian army and navy also undertook nuclear programs. These helped to modernize and restructure the armed forces and to create an enabling connection between the military and civilian society. Equally important is the fact that three individual services were made nearly independent of each other, thereby reducing the ease with which they could agree to intervene in domestic politics. In addition, the nuclear projects and new missions kept the military occupied with something other than domestic politics and facilitated the employment of more civilians in the military. The advantage of creating civilian inroads into the armed forces is that it links military expertise to the higher echelons of governmental decision. Goodpaster, writing on the same subject, noted, that necessary control can be exercised by law, policy regulations, and the consideration and approval of specific proposals. He further said that:

In some areas, the practice has grown up of placing sizable civilian contingents within the defense structure itself - in the Pentagon, for example - particularly in functions such as manpower, facilities, procurement, telecommunications, research and development, and intelligence, which involve a considerable degree of contact with the members of the civilian community and with their congressional representatives.<sup>103</sup>

West African nations should therefore also aim at evolving methods or policies through which more civilians can be employed within the armed forces in order to improve upon prevailing civil-military relations.

The militaries of West African nations are small, so although some have three separate services, the distinction or independence is not clear cut and hence whatever happens in one service heavily impacts on the others. Having seen the benefits of keeping armed services independent of each other, a healthy separation will be an objective worth aiming for. Military leaders may achieve this by deliberately allowing the development of parallel programs within

the three services, as well as the separation of budgets. The advantages that accrue from these steps will far outweigh the inevitable extra cost. It must be noted, however, that joint training must continue to ensure the operational readiness of the armed forces.

Another important reform step taken was the creation of military institutions of higher learning like Brazil's National Defense College and the Venezuelan Institute of Higher Studies of National Defense, both of which had civilian participation at student and faculty levels. The importance of these institutions cannot be overemphasized. Such institutions allow civilian authorities to acquire a knowledge and understanding of military affairs sufficient to formulate credible military policies. These institutions also play a significant role in shaping the ideology of military graduates and their definition of armed forces political roles through exposure to civilian leadership. The military can use such opportunities to articulate its views and concerns to civilian leaders who attend these courses. Such interaction may foster a better understanding of issues by both sides. It has also been suggested that these institutions can serve as the starting point for future regional cooperative research and development work. Due to the smaller economic base of West African nations and the corresponding small size of the armies, it is naive to suggest that they should establish similar military institutions of higher learning because individual nations will be hard put getting credible military officers to attend these institutions. At their inception, there will be few officers available to attend these courses, but to serve the larger purpose these courses must keep running for sometime to facilitate continued civilian military interaction. It is doubtful whether the small military forces in West African nations can continually assign officers to attend these colleges.

Some West African countries like Nigeria and Ghana already have staff colleges where middle level officers (mostly majors) are trained. In fact both admit officers from fellow Anglophone African nations like Sierra Leone, Gambia, Uganda, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Ghana and Nigeria have an exchange program between their two staff colleges. Nigeria, in addition, has a war college (equivalent of Brazil and Venezuela's military institution

of higher learning), though it is still in its infancy. In the interim, before the West African nations can afford to run war colleges, they can upgrade existing staff colleges enabling them play a vital role in facilitating civilian-military relations. This will require the expansion of the faculty and student base to accommodate civilians, foster interaction, ease tensions, create mutual understanding, and heighten political awareness in the military. The political leadership can organize seminars for senior military and civilian leaders for similar reasons. Such reforms would directly address the often quoted problem of civilian interference in the internal affairs of the military as giving rise to coups.

Politicization of the military aims at promoting the reliability of the military in the eyes of the civilian leadership. This is especially important in West Africa where a low level of political consciousness has led certain individuals to participate in interventions. Politicization strategies can cause tensions when the aims are misplaced by emphasizing loyalty to an individual or party instead of the state and the constitution, as were the cases with Nkrumah in Ghana, Sekou Toure of Guinea, and President Eyadema of Togo. Politicization of the military in West African nations may therefore prove to be very helpful if it is well handled. In fact, apart from encouraging the armed forces to remain neutral in the internal political dynamics of their nations, effective politicization may help integrate the military into the political system thereby refraining from alienating or segregating them (military forces).

Since it has become increasingly clear that civilian control of the military is important for stability, West African countries should consider adopting measures to achieve such a goal. Due to the sensitivity of the issue, a gradual approach is suggested. The civilian leadership should openly discuss such sensitive topics and try to find some common grounds for understanding. Spain wisely employed the services of well-meaning and trusted military leaders to provide a required cushioning effect, especially in the initial "fragile" days. Soldiers in West African nations may naturally find it easier to accept intrusions by one of their kind rather than by civilians they might not trust.

The use of party politics to foster civil-military relations in Venezuela may be helpful to West African countries. Promotions above the rank of colonel were the responsibility of the president and congress. This made senior officers identify with one of the parties as a means of assuring their careers. For West Africa, this practice is highly recommended because it helps solve the problem of excessive military cohesion which facilitates coups d'etat. It would be difficult to achieve some consensus among politically diverse soldiers to overthrow an elected regime. A similar policy is already enforced in Ghana, but its shortfall stems from the small size of the armed forces, plus the fact that the measure affects only a few individuals, and therefore has little or no impact. Instead, the policy should be broadened to cover all promotions above the rank of major or lieutenant colonel. NCOs should not be left out because of their active involvement in interventions. To exercise some control over the enlisted personnel as well, civilian governments might consider responsibility for promotions beyond the rank of warrant officer. Perhaps extremely bad governance by a particular ruling civilian regime may be the only reason that will then compel military leaders to overlook their differences and come together to intervene, a move which would nevertheless be most unfortunate.

The use of legal means also proved effective in keeping the military in barracks in all three countries studied. In Spain, a decree not only prohibited political and union activities within the armed forces, but affirmed that soldiers could not hold public office, attend a political meeting, or publicly express their opinion on political matters. They were, however, allowed to exercise their right to vote. Spain used legal means to separate the functions of the police force and civil guard from the military structure. In Brazil, and Venezuela, laws were used to protect members of the armed forces from prosecution for actions committed during the military regime in order to reduce tension between the military and the civilian leadership. The United Kingdom's 1994 strategic concept asserts that Babangida of Nigeria annulled the 1993 elections because of the fear of reprisals against those from the northern part of the nation.<sup>104</sup> Such perceived apprehension could have been avoided if an agreement granting immunity to all

soldiers were finalized before the military relinquished power. This policy of granting immunity from prosecution was tried and has, so far, proven to be effective in Ghana.

One important legal measure that Spain took to reduce military involvement in day-to-day running of the country was stripping the police force and other paramilitary organizations, like the civil guard, of their military links and placing these security agencies under civilian control. In Brazil, the military-dominated national intelligence service was replaced by the civilian-controlled SAE, in addition to a provision being made to train intelligence technicians. Needless to say, the ultimate aim of this legislation was to reduce military involvement in politics. And, as Welch was earlier quoted as saying, among other things, the roles military forces are called upon to play directly affect their political involvement.<sup>105</sup> West African countries may also reduce the involvement of the military forces in domestic politics by creating new civilian-controlled intelligence agencies. The civilian-led intelligence organizations will focus on internal security while external security remains the domain of the military. It appears Ghana has realized the importance of this measure since it has created the civilian-controlled Bureau of National Intelligence (BNI), which deals with internal security issues, an area that was previously the domain of the Ghana military. It would benefit other West African nations if they adopt this measure.

Professionalism also proved to be an effective tool in all the three countries which were studied. A reemphasis on this issue is suggested despite the nagging fear that it can equally cause military interventions. In the first place, military professionalism demands extensive and continuous training, which activities alone will keep the armed forces occupied and distracted from conspiring to overthrow elected regimes. The training will be most effective if the mission is focused, realistic, and structured to demand high standards from the individual soldier. The leadership should clearly state the mission of the armed forces in each West African state to facilitate realistic training. Writing on the armed forces and democracy, Juan Rial noted that it is important to establish a clear mission for the armed forces without causing their segmentation

and separation from the rest of society. The military alone should not define its mission, but "members of both the political class and the military should share a common view of what war and peace mean."<sup>106</sup> As was shown in the case studies, it is essential to emphasize a more externally focused role for the military to divert their attention from domestic issues.

In addition, due to the recurring tendency for soldiers in West African countries to intervene in domestic politics, the training of the military should be expanded to include instruction on subjects like the proper role of the armed forces in democratic institutions, the negative effects of interventions, and the soldiers' relationship to and respect for the law of the land. Specifically, training should emphasize the important fact that the military is subordinate to the civilian leadership, especially as ideally the regimes represent the will of the people in any country. It will be most beneficial if the armed forces use both military and civilian officers to instruct and openly discuss such sensitive topics.

The call for professionalization of the armed forces in West African nations does not imply increasing the strength of the military and the purchase of expensive military hardware. The economies of most of the nations definitely cannot support such expensive ventures. Instead, the military and civilian leaders should reduce the sizes of their militaries, while placing more emphasis on enhancing operational readiness through realistic training and implementation of viable welfare programs for the troops.

Considerable effort has been devoted to analyzing those measures that were taken in Brazil, Venezuela, and Spain to keep the military within the barracks and to ensure the military's neutrality in internal political affairs. This understanding reinforces the fact that one major contribution the military can make to promote democracy is through nonintervention, while assuming that civilian authorities will also do their part to enhance the growth of the system. This role (or nonrole) by the military in West African countries will be crucial to the evolution of democracy. The application of all or some of the measures discussed will no doubt result in increased military expenditures, but civilian leaders in the individual nations should endeavor to

absorb this extra cost in view of the ultimate objective of achieving stability. It is equally important to note that the armed forces' neutrality alone is no guarantee against the nonintervention of the military, but rather the civilian and military leadership should evolve creative measures that will enhance the integration of the military into the political system.

#### Contributions to Democracy

Apart from playing the above-described passive role, military forces should take an active role as well with regard to the growth of democracy in the West African countries. The case studies provide ample evidence of positive constructive roles the armed forces in any nation can play to support democracy.

One observation highlighted the involvement of the Brazilian and Venezuelan armed forces in the production of military equipment. In Brazil, the military's industrial complex is not only a major export income earner, but it employs about 200,000 workers and is valued at \$12 to \$15 billion. These earnings greatly ease Brazil's balance of payments problem. The Venezuelan navy for its part undertook construction of an aqueduct for the island of Margarita, while the army built highways in remote areas. The Venezuelan military also organized vaccination campaigns and offered health services for the poor. In all three case studies the military retained emergency and disaster relief responsibilities. The importance of such roles cannot be overemphasized because of their tremendous impact on economic well being and political stability. Such programs not only provide job opportunities but also facilitate the employment of civilians in the armed forces, thereby helping to demistify the military and integrate the two elements of society into one whole.

Militaries in West African countries can adopt this measure, but they should also shape it to suit their unique circumstances. The armed forces should not necessarily involve themselves in arms and armament production, but may undertake highway or feeder road construction, especially in remote areas where necessity rather than costs are the driving forces in



development programs. Further, they may actively participate in health and other suitable social programs, including the construction of wells, hospitals, schools, etc., that do not impact directly on domestic politics. Other suggested activities, include agricultural projects, like farming, poultry, and livestock raising, and even the construction of small-scale dams for farmers. Each individual nation should decide what the military might do to advance social development. The armed forces will be able to sustain themselves in such endeavors if governments require that they operate strictly on a commercial basis. The relevance of such a role is seen in light of the fact that international financial institutions insist on commitments to democracy as a condition for the granting of loans for development. Consequently, apart from refraining from directly intervening in the domestic politics of their nation, the military would be contributing immensely to democracy if it helps in social development and therefore facilitates stability in the country. The military will best be used in the civil construction field if the government assigns it the responsibility for assisting in the development of inaccessible and remote areas by using capital that financial institutions will provide. Due to the requirement for construction during combat, militaries all over the world enlist skilled workers, technicians, and engineers. The armed forces of West African states are no exception. It might be cheaper to equip them adequately for them to undertake such ventures.

Another important area in which the military can contribute positively to enhance democracy is in the limited maintenance of internal security. To restrain the military from excessive involvement in daily domestic politics, each nation should define the military's internal security role. As was shown in the case of Venezuela, the military was invited to intervene to restore law and order when the level of civil disobedience in the country was nearing anarchy. The armed forces successfully restored stability to allow other acceptable means to resolve the conflict. Without military intervention in Venezuela, complete chaos would have resulted, and democracy would have suffered a stunning blow.

Internal security should include counterinsurgency where the military may be called in to defeat an insurgent movement that uses force either to overthrow the elected government or to secede from the nation as was the case in the 1967-70 Biafran war in Nigeria. These are legitimate roles the military should perform, but military leaders and civilian authorities should agree and specify strict circumstances under which political leaders can order armed forces out to restore law and order. It is pertinent to add that the military is not a tool for oppressing citizenry but only an instrument for ensuring stability and governability. The mere presence of a well-trained force can be a forceful deterrence to any group that is contemplating the unrestricted use of force to champion its ideas. The armed forces of most nations perform this role because it is vital to the survival of democratic regimes. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the armed forces are employed in Northern Ireland to contain the onslaught of the Irish Revolutionary Army, popularly called the IRA. Even in the USA, the National Guard and sometimes the Active Army perform a similar vital internal security role. For example, the states of Arkansas and Alabama employed the National Guard to enforce the federal desegregation policy in 1964. Active duty Army personnel were deployed to support the California National Guard to restore law and order during recent Los Angeles riots. Most West African nations do not have similar reserve forces and are compelled therefore to employ their military forces to execute this role. With relatively smaller economic bases, the countries within the West Africa region cannot afford to maintain both active and reserve forces. Consequently, the military will continue to perform this role in the future.

The internal security role of the armed forces is important because it indirectly provides a secure environment in which economic activity can go on without hindrance. Specifically, this military role further provides for food security; otherwise, farmers cannot operate in conflict areas. This point is best illustrated by the famines that have followed civil wars in Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Bosnia, Lebanon, Mozambique, Liberia, and Rwanda. The cost (in terms of human lives and budgetary requirements) of restoring peace in these areas far outstrips the costs

of the security and enabling environment the military can provide to prevent these conflicts. It is also known that democratic institutions allow the amicable resolution of conflicts; hence, the military's internal security role is vital in this direction because it facilitates the promotion of democracy.

Due to the peculiar disrespect that West African nations' politicians in the past have shown for democracy, the possibility remains for future infringement of constitutions. The military by default may, therefore, become the last institution that can intervene to restore a constitution. The dangers associated with this role are obvious; it is a role easily abused by ambitious soldiers. This danger may be reduced through careful planning. The constitution may, for instance, specify that the nation's chief justice or attorney general (if the office is not a political appointment) has the authority to invite the military to take over when the constitution is not being respected. The constitution should, furthermore, stipulate the steps that the nation should follow to restore democracy. With the maturing of democracy, the military may never be called upon to undertake or execute this responsibility, but drastic action may be necessary in these "fragile" times.

In addition to its internal security role, West African military forces can contribute to democratic growth by engaging in international assignments, including peacekeeping operations. This suggestion is made, because as already stated, the West African countries presently do not face the threat of a major conflict. The absence of such a threat has often been stated as one of the reasons for frequent military involvement in domestic politics. Military involvement in external assignments can compensate for this shortcoming and help focus the attention of the troops away from domestic politics. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and consequent ending of the Cold War, military operations other than war have occupied the attention of military analysts. Peacekeeping operations are becoming very important, with most nations devoting time and resources to train for it. The military forces in West African countries seem

suitable for peacekeeping operations because they are normally light forces, compared with the heavy forces of the more advanced Western countries.

Equally important are the monetary gains that result from these peacekeeping operations. Monetary gains accrue not only to the individual officers and men, but also to the nations as well, in the sense that the governments can retain part of the allowances the international organizations pay to participating countries. The foreign exchange earned from operations can contribute tremendously to the economic development of the nations and to the satisfaction of individual soldiers, possibly making them less radical. Ghana presently participates in many United Nations peacekeeping operations, a policy the government should continue to pursue. Other West African countries can also benefit and contribute to stability in their nations if they adopt this policy.

Finally, as ECOWAS matures and succeeds in overcoming its teething problems it can deploy forces from the region to contain and assist in resolving conflicts that threaten the security of the subregion. This concept has been tried in the current deployment of ECOMOG forces in Liberia to stop the civil war raging since 1990. Although the force has achieved limited success, ECOMOG contained the conflict and prevented it from spilling over into neighboring countries. In spite of numerous problems, ECOMOG can form the nucleus for the future formation of a more organized force, ready for response to crises within West Africa or even the whole African continent. There is ample evidence that conflicts in one country can impact on other nations, especially if they are within the same subregion. Hence, the performance of such peacekeeping roles can indirectly contribute to stability in individual countries, thereby enhancing democracy.

## Conclusion

West African nations belong to one of the most unstable regions of the world. Since most of the countries in the region gained independence about forty years ago, there has been

much turmoil resulting in low productivity, unemployment, and a sense of hopelessness.

Internal conflicts are common, widespread, and difficult to resolve. Some social observers have correctly expressed fears that there will be total anarchy if nations in the region do not take urgent steps to arrest the deteriorating situation. Continued instability has led to the failure of democratic experiments in most of these countries. There are various causes for this state of instability, but the major ones are ethnicity, religious differences, economic stagnation, poor political leadership by national leaders, and the frequency of military coups d'etat. There also seems to be no tested structures available to correct the prevailing unstable situation in the nations within the region.

A new trend, however, is slowly emerging in West African nations; a trend which suggests that the citizens are tired and long for democratic systems of government. This trend is not surprising because a wave of democratization is sweeping across the new states of Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and other Africa subregions. In addition, West African states are responding to Western international financial institutions and other world donors which insist that emerging nations adopt the democratic model of government to qualify for loans. That West African nations require loans for economic and social development cannot be overemphasized. So far, however, West African nations have indicated their desire for democratization through the formation of informal organizations and pressure groups that have succeeded in forcing otherwise authoritarian regimes to change some policies. Quite apart from this, it is refreshing that some West African countries like Ghana, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo, and Gabon are currently led by democratically elected civilian governments. It appears that this trend will continue until the societies mature and adopt more completely the democratic system of government. This is a good sign that must be encouraged because, although democracy is not a perfect system, it has proved to be the best alternative model, so far available. The fact that democratic institutions have been known to provide structures for the amicable

settlement of conflicts and disputes renders the successful evolution of democracy very important to such an unstable region.

It is really not the first time that West African nations have attempted to adopt the democratic system of government. But most previous attempts were disrupted by military interference in domestic politics of their nations. Most democratically elected regimes were rarely given the chance to prove their worth before they were violently overthrown by soldiers. There have been only a few cases when military leaders could justify these interventions. In fact contemporary social scientists believe that in spite of the rational reasons given by coup leaders, personal ambition, greed, and vanity seem to be the strongest motivating forces. For this reason coups remain a serious threat to the current democratic trend in West African nations.

Case studies of Brazil, Venezuela, and Spain, all of which have successfully managed to overcome the problem of military interventions in domestic politics, clearly show that civilian authorities and military leaders can take specific steps to ensure that their armed forces remain not only neutral, but even positively integrated into the political system. An analysis of these case studies shows that one major action the military in West Africa can take to contribute to the evolution of democracy in their nations is to restrain itself from intervening in domestic politics. Civilian authorities and military leaders should openly discuss and find solutions to sensitive issues that have caused coups in the past. The employment of more civilians (especially in leadership positions) in the military, education, and controlled politicization of troops may also help improve civil-military relations. If a military coup d'etat has occurred, steps must be taken to assure a well thought out transitional period, during which the civilian leadership working with reliable military leaders enacts policies related to legal issues, the improvement of soldiers' salaries and service conditions, and implementation of other measures including control over certain categories of promotions in the military. Civilian authorities are advised to absorb the extra cost of these measures, since the objective of democratic stability is definitely more important and more dear.

In addition to refraining from intervention in domestic politics, military forces can positively contribute to the evolution of democracy in their nations through participation in income generating economic activity, construction work, and other emergency relief duties.

The military also conducts operations other than war to ensure security and stability as prerequisites for economic activity and food production. This study has emphasized the need for caution in defining the internal security roles of militaries in their countries, since too much involvement can lead to interventions. This assertion does not, however, diminish the importance of the military's security enhancing role, especially if the armed forces in any of the West African countries are called upon to contain and defeat an insurgency.

The militaries of West African nations may also contribute to democracy in their nations by participating in international peacekeeping operations since such operations are an efficient method of providing a mission on which armed forces can focus their attention and remain above local politics. Peacekeeping operations also serve as a good source of foreign exchange for the national governments within the region.

Finally, as the custodians of the constitution, military forces in West African nations can assist in the growth of democracy by ensuring that successive regimes respect and uphold their countries' constitutions.

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<sup>3</sup> "Democracy in Africa," The Economist, (22 February 1992): 20.

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<sup>6</sup> Institute of National Strategic Studies, 1995 Strategic Assessment For the US on Africa (1995): 101.

<sup>7</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook 1995 (Washington DC 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Hans Binnendijk, ed., "Sub-Saharan Africa," Strategic Assessment 1995 (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 1995): 98.

<sup>9</sup> Constantine P. Danopoulos, ed., Civilian Rule in the Developing World, Democracy on the March? (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 251. Constantine Danopoulos teaches Political Science at San Jose University and has written extensively on international security and civil-military relations.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy" Atlantic Monthly (February 1994): 44-48. Mr. Kaplan is an American free lance journalist, social observer, and author of several books including Balkan Ghosts.

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<sup>13</sup> Larry Diamond, "The Globalization of Democracy," Robert Slater et al., Global Transformation and the Third World (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), 36. Larry Diamond is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and has authored numerous articles on Nigerian politics and Democracy in Africa.



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<sup>21</sup> Samuel Decalo was a visiting professor of African Government, University of Natal, Durban, South Africa.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher Clapman is Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Politics, University of Lancaster, who has written numerous articles on third world politics. George Philip is lecturer at the London School of Economics and the Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London.

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<sup>32</sup> James Coleman and Belmont Brice, "The Military in Sub-Saharan African" in J. J. Johnson, ed., The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries (Connecticut: Greenwood, 1972), 387-390.

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<sup>90</sup> Dankwart Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy," Comparative Politics, (April 1970):

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<sup>93</sup> Huntington, The Soldier and the State (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 83.

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<sup>95</sup> Rodrigo, 69.

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<sup>97</sup> Claude Welch, No Farewell to Arms?, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 22.

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<sup>100</sup> He actively participated in Rawlings' 1981 coup and was therefore a member of the ruling junta that was constituted. There were even more enlisted personnel on the ruling council during the 1979 take over in Ghana. Sergeant Akata Pore fell out of favour with Rawlings and is presently in exile outside the country.

<sup>101</sup> Baffour Agyeman-Duah, "Military Coups, Regime Change and Interstate Conflicts in West Africa," Armed Forces & Society 16 no. 4 (Summer 1990): 554. Baffour Agyemang-Duah is an associate professor and director of the Division of Social Sciences and International Studies Program at Bennet College, Greenboro, North Carolina.

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